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N'COBRA

National Coalition Of Blacks For Reparations In America



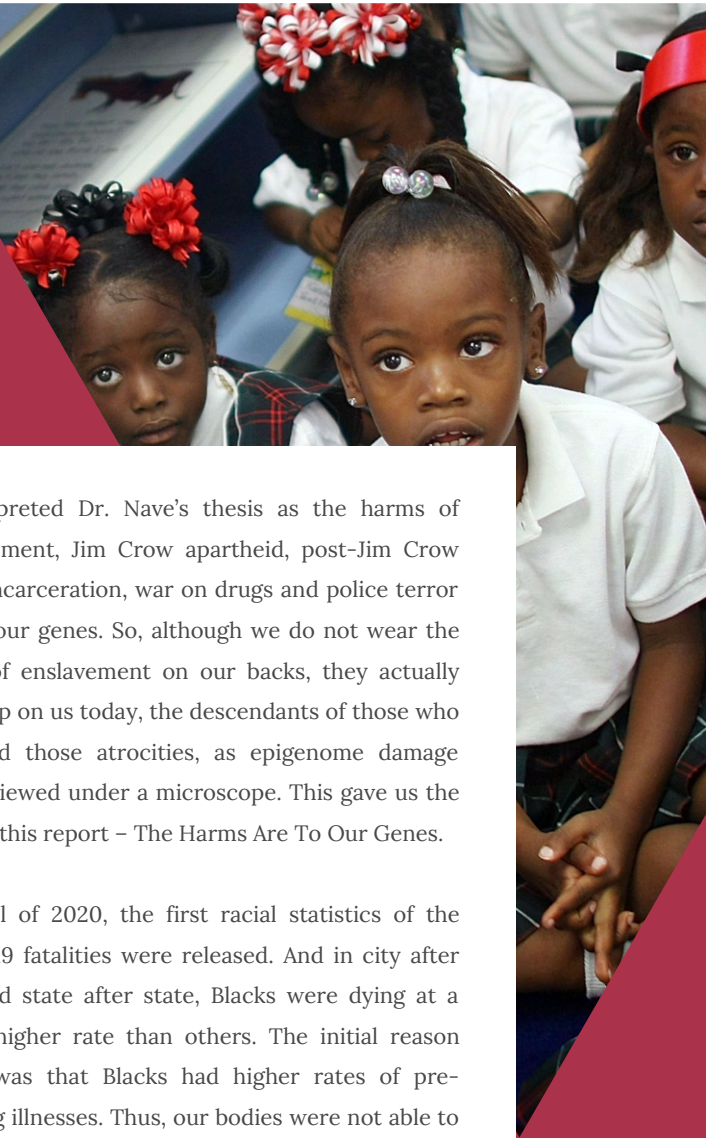
2021 REPORT

The Harm Is To Our Genes

Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance &
Systemic Racism in the United States

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INTRODUCING THE HARM IS TO OUR GENES



In 2015, I received an email from Dr. Kenneth Nave, MD of Chicago, with research on transgenerational epigenetics. This was the first time I had ever heard of the term. Dr. Nave was working on a theory to overcome the “standing” issue that was used to deny Blacks reparations in the 2005 federal reparations lawsuit. The lawsuit targeted various corporations for their atrocities during and after enslavement, as well as their enrichment from those atrocities. Judge Charles Norgle, of the US District Court of Northern District of Illinois made the ruling.

Standing, deals with the ability to sue, based on the person suing being the actual injured party or closely related to the injured party – like spouse or child, and in some cases, grandchild. Being “too far removed” from the crimes of enslavement (multiple generations past), ruled Norgle, prohibited us from having standing to sue.

Dr. Nave, on the other hand, saw it differently. He understood that historical trauma negatively manipulates gene structures, that those manipulations create a high probability for illness, that the changes and propensity for illness can, and often are, passed down multiple generations, and finally that the historical trauma never really ended for us. So, Dr. Nave concluded we were in fact, *the actual injured parties* based on this inherited injury. His work led to the book, **Competent Proof: The Legal Standing African Americans Have in the Battle for Slavery Reparations.**

I interpreted Dr. Nave’s thesis as the harms of enslavement, Jim Crow apartheid, post-Jim Crow mass incarceration, war on drugs and police terror are in our genes. So, although we do not wear the scars of enslavement on our backs, they actually show up on us today, the descendants of those who endured those atrocities, as epigenome damage when viewed under a microscope. This gave us the title to this report – The Harms Are To Our Genes.

In April of 2020, the first racial statistics of the Covid 19 fatalities were released. And in city after city and state after state, Blacks were dying at a much higher rate than others. The initial reason given was that Blacks had higher rates of pre-existing illnesses. Thus, our bodies were not able to fight off the virus. I connected this high death rate to the historical harms that have impacted our genes. The pre-existing illnesses that Blacks have at an alarming rate – diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, are all illness that are associated with transgenerational epigenetic inheritance. I immediately wrote an article, “*Trans-Generational Epigenetic Injury is the Cause of the Higher Black Deaths from Covid 19.*”

That article, published in the *Chicago Crusader*, led to several conversations and presentations within N’COBRA and the Black Community. Those conversations led to the need to examine and assemble the existing scientific literature on historical trauma, transgenerational transmission of trauma and transgenerational epigenetic

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inheritance (injury). Shortly thereafter, I was connected to Dr. Joan Kaufman of the Kennedy Krieger Institute, an affiliate of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dr. Kaufman was very familiar with the subject and had done a similar type of scientific review on adverse childhood experiences. This connection has proved to be fruitful.

In releasing this report, *The Harm is To Our Genes*, N'COBRA has five (5) outcomes we desire:

1. **Inclusion** – we want all discussions on the health disparities of the Black community to include the fact that this community, and only this community, has experienced over 400 years of historical trauma in the manner in which it has (i), which can, has, and will possibly negatively impact our health at some point in our lifetime.

2. **Resources** – we want resources directed to mitigate the effect of the historical trauma, i.e., transgenerational transmission of trauma and transgenerational epigenetic inherited injury.

3. **Research** – as most of the research on transgenerational epigenetic inheritance has been on animals, we want specific research on our communities by our researchers, with our practitioners to chart a course of transgenerational healing for our community.

4. **Awareness** – we want cities, states, and the federal government to provide awareness information on the existence and possible ways that our community can individually address this reality.

5. **Decolonization of Health** – many alternative healing modalities, in particular, African, and African-centered healing modalities must be understood, accepted, adopted, funded, and utilized in the effort to heal our communities from the centuries of terror, trauma, and abuse.

This is just the beginning. Let's work to heal the harm that is to our genes.

Following this Harm Report is a Post Script by N'COBRA's Health Commission, entitled, African Centered Healing is Essential to Our Health and Well-being.

(i) Hunter Adams, III, describes our experience as “ a singularity of subjugation – never before in human history has an equivalent system of exploitation occurred so comprehensive it resulted in “complete defeat” – the denial of a people's ability to survive on their own terms, loss of control of their children's custody and socialization, and ultimately, loss of control of their future.

